



Center for Responsible Travel

Transforming the Way the World Travels

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Panel 1: Social Inclusiveness, employment, and poverty reduction

Presentation Overview – Chris Blackwell, owner, Island Outpost

How was Island Outpost started?

I purchased [Strawberry Hill](#) in Jamaica in 1972, and it became a haven for musicians and entertainers to visit and sojourn. During the '70s and '80s, many famous artists visited the property, including the Rolling Stones and Bob Marley, who convalesced at Strawberry Hill after being shot in 1976.

In 1986, Strawberry Hill opened to the public as a restaurant and received the National Heritage in Architecture Award. However, in 1988 the Great House was completely destroyed by Hurricane Gilbert. In 1991, I commissioned Ann Hodges, a Jamaican architect specializing in restoration architecture, to build me a cottage on the property.

Many years earlier, in 1976, I purchased [GoldenEye](#) in Jamaica, which was the original home of James Bond author [Ian Fleming](#). The accommodations were limited, so I slowly added cottages over the years. By the late 1980s, it was opened as a resort but was never widely promoted. In late 2010, GoldenEye was developed with the addition of beach and lagoon villas.

In 1989, I sold [Island Records](#) and focused on a new hospitality venture in Miami, to which Island Outpost was subsequently incorporated in 1994. This was a natural step from music to hospitality, since I'd already owned The Marlin Hotel in South Beach and Compass Point in the Bahamas. These two hotels were equipped with recording studios and became natural hubs for musicians to visit and record music.

In 2004, I sold my Miami portfolio of hotels and focused solely on the Bahamas and Jamaica. My vision was "approachable but not stuffy" for my hotels, and I've always believed that you look for a location that is fantastic, and then make it comfortable.

Island Outpost now comprises three hotels: GoldenEye in St. Mary, Strawberry Hill in Kingston, and [The Caves](#) in Negril. I wanted all the properties to share a common sensibility, which of course makes them appealing to the sophisticated, laid-back traveler seeking a personal and relaxed experience—just like you feel when staying in the home of good friends.

Community – the Foundation, the Fish Sanctuary and Farming

When I started Island Records in Jamaica over 50 years ago, it was because I was captivated by the rhythms and the storytellers of a rich and diverse culture. Having achieved some success since then,

built on the foundation of that Jamaican music, I have always tried to make it a priority to give back to the people of Jamaica.

I founded [The Oracabessa Foundation](#) in 1997 with the mission to serve as a catalyst for the sustainable development of Oracabessa and its environs. The Oracabessa Foundation is focused on making an impact in three key areas: the Oracabessa Bay, more people working, and the youth in the community.

The Oracabessa Fish Sanctuary is a joint effort between the foundation and the Oracabessa Fisherman's Group. Officially recognized by the Jamaican Government in December 2010, the sanctuary is a no-fishing zone designed to help replenish fish stocks within the bay. In recent years, we have seen tremendous results, including a 1,313-percent increase in fish biomass; a 153-percent increase in coral coverage, and a 43-percent reduction in algae coverage.

Through the efforts of GoldenEye Hotel & Resort and Dr. Andrew Ross, Oracabessa Bay has been a leader in coral propagation. In March 2012, the Oracabessa Bay Fish Sanctuary launched its own Coral Propagation Project through the generous support of the [Global Environment Facility Small Grants Program](#). This project propagated 2,000 individual pieces of staghorn coral and out-planted them within our reefs over an 18-month period.

The Hawksbill Sea Turtle Program is thriving under the Oracabessa Foundation's partnership with [Mel Tennant](#) and has been able to establish one of the most successful sea turtle preservation and restoration projects in the Caribbean. With funding from the Global Environment Facility and tireless work from Mel, over 1500 square meters of turtle-nesting habitat has been reclaimed, and in 2014, over 19,000 sea turtles hatched within the sanctuary!

With the youth in the nearby community of Oracabessa, sport has been an integral component of the foundation's strategy since its inception. Our work encompasses both "Development OF Sport" and "Development THROUGH Sport" principles. Thousands of schoolchildren have competed in our various leagues and competitions over the past 15 years. We currently organize boys football, girls football, track-and-field, and netball leagues in conjunction with local primary schools.

In terms of farming and agriculture, I have always believed that Jamaica has some of the best coffee, sugar, ginger, and cocoa in the world. My farm, [Pantrepant](#)—originally a sugar plantation—is a 2,500-acre cattle farm in the hills of Trelawny, Jamaica, which I purchased in 1989. Pantrepant is first and foremost a home and private retreat.

Soon after purchasing the farm, I eradicated the use of chemicals and opted for a more labor-intensive, natural method of farming. To date, Pantrepant has diverted 20,000 pounds of recyclable materials from landfills, and it has composted more than 1,000 pounds of waste. The introduction of solar power has reduced the farm's energy bills by 40 percent.

Pantrepant also provides GoldenEye with deliveries of more than 30 in-season fruits and vegetables each week, and the goal is to be the sole provider to more hotels and villas along the North Coast of Jamaica.